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Commercial Partners Key to Hurricane Recovery Efforts

BETHESDA, Md.—Unprecedented support by several key commercial partners has been critical to National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) support to Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

NGA is providing tailored geospatial information and products for the affected region to a wide variety of federal, state and local customers.

“Satellite providers ORBIMAGE, Space Imaging and DigitalGlobe have eased licensing restrictions and constraints to greatly enhance our ability to share information with first responders,” said Doug McGovern, NGA’s Commercial Imagery Program Manager. Satellite providers’ exclusive agreements with Google and Microsoft normally would preclude data sharing amongst these service providers. “Their flexibility has enhanced our ability to provide information to first responders,” he said.

“In addition,” said John Dale, a Program Manager in NGA’s Enterprise Operations, “Google, Microsoft and ESRI are providing their information services as part of a gratuity agreement with NGA—without any additional fees.”

While first responders are the primary users of data provided in FTP, HTTP and JPEG 2000 formats, said Dale, Google, Microsoft and ESRI have enhanced that data. They are providing the tools—the application software—that makes the imagery products user-friendly to a much broader audience.

In addition a Harris Corp.-led team, with support from ITT Industries and Idelix Software Inc., has established a collaborative Web presence to consolidate access to data and tools at KatrinaImagery.org. This site includes a recently developed capability to stream selected subsets of large imagery files to users with limited bandwidth, a key requirement for any location lacking communications infrastructure.

NGA is providing geospatial information about the affected areas to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government agencies. The information is based on imagery from commercial and U.S. government satellites, as well as from airborne platforms.

NGA is a Department of Defense combat support agency and a member of the National Intelligence Community. The Agency's mission is to provide timely, relevant and accurate geospatial intelligence—that shows what's where on the Earth—in support of our national security. Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., NGA has major facilities in the Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia and St. Louis, Mo., areas with NGA support teams worldwide.